

(Mr. ANDREWS asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. ANDREWS. Mr. Chairman, I thank my friend for yielding, and I rise in strong support of the amendment offered by my friend and neighbor from New Jersey (Mr. SAXTON), and I thank him for his decisive and quick action in dealing with the problem of protecting our servicemembers and employees and visitors to our military bases. I am proud to join with him in this amendment.

At this time, I yield to the gentlewoman from Arizona for the purpose of a colloquy.

Ms. GIFFORDS. I thank the gentleman.

I rise today to raise serious concerns about the amendment to H.R. 1585 that would require background checks for all civilians entering military installations.

I certainly appreciate the need to secure our installations, especially considering the recent events in your home State of New Jersey. But I would like to bring a unique situation to your attention.

My southern Arizona district is home to Fort Huachuca, a critical national asset that is home to Army Intelligence and Electronic Testing and was recently designated the Joint Center of Excellence for Human Intelligence Training.

Fort Huachuca occupies over 73,000 acres of rugged desert terrain. The geography of the area forces the citizens of Elgin and Canelo, along with the surrounding communities, to rely on access through the fort to get to their ranches and homes. This amendment would cause significant hardship to the surrounding community that has had access to the installation for decades. I believe that this is not a unique situation, and there may be other circumstances where the restrictions placed on military installations could be onerous.

Mr. ANDREWS. I thank the gentlewoman for raising this important issue. I assure the gentlelady that I recognize her concerns about the specific military installation in her district and do not want this legislation to cause hardship on its surrounding communities.

Ms. GIFFORDS. I would like to ask that the gentleman work with me to address the unique circumstances of the Army installations in southern Arizona.

Mr. ANDREWS. I am aware of the extraordinary burden that this requirement could impose on residents of rural and remote areas of southern Arizona. I look forward to working with the gentlelady to find an appropriate accommodation.

Ms. GIFFORDS. I thank the gentleman for his support.

Mr. ANDREWS. Reclaiming my time, I again thank Mr. SKELTON, Mr. HUNTER, and Mr. SAXTON for this, I think, excellent effort to improve upon

a very real problem that we saw in acute relief last week in New Jersey. I would urge adoption of the amendment.

Mr. TOM DAVIS of Virginia. Mr. Chairman, my amendment to extend for three years the Information Technology Exchange Program—also known as the Digital Tech Corps—has been included in this en bloc amendment, and I thank the Chairman and Ranking Member for accepting this amendment.

In 2002, I included language in the Electronic Government Act of 2002 creating the Digital Tech Corps program.

The program gives mid-level federal IT managers the opportunity for intensive, on-the-job training in how the private sector manages complex IT projects. Too many complex federal IT procurements fail because of improper management. The Tech Corps gives employees insight and experience in how the best companies in the world are successfully managing IT so they can bring this knowledge back to government.

The Tech Corps works in reverse as well, giving private sector IT employees the opportunity to volunteer for rewarding public service. In tackling some of the world's toughest IT problems, they can return to their companies understanding the challenges facing the world's largest employer.

The Tech Corps program is a relatively new vision for public service in this century, enabling broader public-private sector exchanges of talented IT professionals. It builds on the successes of other successful personnel exchanges, such as the 1970 Intergovernmental Personnel Act (IPA).

All Tech Corps participants must adhere to strict federal employee ethics rules, and they must abide by the laws and rules of the agency and Federal Government. Participants do not receive any special privileges, pay, or incentives—all participants retain pay and benefits from their respective employers while participating in the program.

The Electronic Government Act of 2002 required the Office of Personnel Management to issue guidance for agencies engaging in the Tech Corps program. Agencies had 5 years from the date of enactment in December 2002 to implement the program. OPM issued its guidance in 2005, making it difficult for agencies to receive the full benefits of implementing the program.

Since the issuance of OPM's guidelines in 2005 and the approval of DOD's Tech Corps policy in 2006, the agency has worked aggressively to get its Tech Corps program off the ground. Nearly a dozen DOD components have expressed interest in participating in the program.

My amendment would extend the authorization period of the Information Technology Exchange Program (ITEP) by 3 years for the Department of Defense (DOD) so it can achieve the intended benefits of the program.

In particular, the benefits of the Tech Corps program include: (1) participants learn new job skills; (2) the private sector employees can learn about government procedures and processes; (3) the public and private sectors can share best practices; (4) participating organizations are infused with new ideas; and (5) participants gain perspective from others, improve personal competencies and skills, and close skill gaps within the government organizations.

I urge my colleagues to support this amendment.

I also express my support for language included in this en bloc amendment offered by my colleague, Mr. MORAN, which would require that the transportation infrastructure necessary to accommodate the large influx of military personnel and civilian employees to be assigned to Fort Belvoir, VA, as part of the BRAC realignment of the installation, be substantially completed before the relocation of these employees.

The 2005 BRAC Commission recommended relocating 22,000 Department of Defense personnel to Fort Belvoir by 2011. That is a workforce equal to that of the Pentagon. Due to the magnitude of the BRAC realignment, the existing congestion in the Springfield area, and the potential impact on the surrounding community—and indeed all of Northern Virginia—BRAC implementation has to be done right.

I voted against the BRAC recommendations for several reasons, including my belief DoD had not adequately considered the ramifications of transferring 22,000 new personnel to Fort Belvoir within a 6-year timeframe.

Since the recommendations were approved, I have worked diligently with my colleagues to ensure the Army is sensitive to the concerns of my constituents and devotes adequate time and resources to mitigate the impact of BRAC to the extent possible.

I would like to commend my colleague for this amendment, because it gets to the heart of the matter: it ensures the necessary transportation infrastructure will be in place before personnel begin to relocate to Fort Belvoir. This only makes sense.

Without sufficient infrastructure, daily commutes could last for hours. In fact, it might simply be impossible for DoD personnel to even get to and from work, thereby preventing agencies from being able to accomplish their missions. It surely would mark a drastic reduction in quality of life for those employees stuck in what could be a traffic nightmare, and I would submit could easily lead to significant turnover.

I would also like to take this opportunity to thank Chairman SKELTON and Ranking Member HUNTER for including language in the bill to require the Army and GSA to work out an agreement to allow the Army to use the GSA warehouse property in Springfield. This facility is located adjacent to an existing Metro and Virginia Railway Express station, yet it currently is used for warehouse space. I have long thought this federal property could be put to much better use than warehouses. With this language, we will put this property to much better use, promote transit options, and take cars off the road. Again, I am most grateful this provision has been included.

In closing, I would like to thank Mr. MORAN for this amendment and for his continued hard work on behalf of Northern Virginians. I urge my colleagues to support this language and the en bloc amendment.

Mr. SMITH of New Jersey. Mr. Chairman, after scouting possible targets in New Jersey and Pennsylvania, the six members of a terrorist cell arrested in New Jersey last week chose to attack Fort Dix due to the access one member had to that installation. As a pizza delivery man, he was able to get on the base, survey the infrastructure and personnel, draw maps, and determine the best locations for the highest kill rate.